

Inter faith strategy

Towards a framework for inter faith dialogue and social action
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Overview: A renewed commitment to community cohesion

How cohesive are we?

The Commission on Integration and Cohesion

The Government's response

- **A new Public Service Agreement (PSA 21)** to build cohesive, empowered and active communities
- **Increased investment** - £50m over the next 3 years to promote community cohesion and support local authorities in preventing and managing tensions
- Our approach is based on **six key principles**
 - A move away from a “one size fits all” approach
 - Mainstreaming of cohesion into wider policy areas
 - A national framework for local support and guidance
 - Integration of new migrants and existing communities
 - Building positive relationships
 - A stronger focus on what works

A new definition of cohesion

Our vision of an integrated and cohesive community is based on **three foundations** and **three key ways of living together**:

Foundations	Ways of living together
People from different backgrounds having similar life opportunities	A shared future vision and sense of belonging
People knowing their rights and responsibilities	A focus on what new and existing communities have in common, alongside a recognition of the value of diversity
People trusting one another and trusting local institutions to act fairly	Strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds

Inter faith strategy – the policy context

<p>Commission on Integration and Cohesion</p>	<p>Ten point action plan to promote cohesion and tackle community tensions.</p>
<p>Local Government White Paper</p>	<p>Local democracy Community empowerment Extremism</p>
<p>Prime Ministers Statement</p>	<p>“Stronger inter-faith dialogue ...the common ground that exists between the different religions and communities of our country” “Inter-faith councils in every constituency and community of our country so that we can bring together the faiths and all moderate opinion against those extremists who are trying to disrupt our civilisation.”</p>



Towards a framework for inter faith dialogue and social action

Strategic vision

Face-to-Face:

Dialogue which builds good relations and breaking down barriers between people, whether those barriers relate to faith, race, culture or tradition.

Side-by-Side:

Developing collaborative social action and partnership working by faith communities

Aims

- To facilitate inter faith dialogue which builds understanding and celebrates the values held in common such as integrity in public life, care, compassion and respect
- To increase the level of collaborative social action involving different faith communities and wider civil society where people work together to bring about positive and concrete change within their local communities
- To maintain and further develop good relations between faith communities and between faith communities and wider civil society
- To overcome the perceived and actual barriers faced by young people and women in participating in inter faith dialogue and social action

The four building blocks

<p>Structures which facilitate interaction and social action</p>	<p>Growth of formal and informal associational structures within and between faith communities and the increasing connections with wider civil society.</p>
<p>Opportunities for learning which build understanding</p>	<p>Opportunities to identify common values and gain confidence in engaging with others. Tackling myths and misconceptions, developing understanding and recognising distinctiveness.</p>
<p>Shared spaces for interaction and social action</p>	<p>Shared spaces that are safe and well managed encouraging interaction and opportunities for people to pursue shared activities.</p>
<p>Confidence and skills to bridge and link</p>	<p>The confidence and knowledge to move from ‘bonding’ social capital to ‘bridging’ and ‘linking’ .</p>

Focus on interaction

The Commission on Integration and Cohesion set out **four key ‘spheres of interaction’** where it was felt a focus on interaction would help build integration and cohesion.

Spheres of Interaction	
Schools	Workplace
Sports, culture and leisure	Shared public spaces and residential areas

Research

- We are currently examining the evidence base with a focus on the role and impact of inter faith activity in building cohesive communities and what we know about existing inter faith activity
- We need to understand more clearly what needs to be done to overcome perceived or actual barriers to inter faith activity in our local communities
- We are looking at what is needed and how we can create a framework for partnership between government (national, regional, local) and communities (national, regional, local)

Outputs

The strategy will:

- set out the practical steps being taken by government, faith communities, wider civil society, faith and non faith based organisations and inter faith organisations to increase inter faith activity within local communities
- set out our investment to support inter faith activity
- include a “menu” of options to support local authorities in their thinking
- share existing expertise by signposting effective practice and guidance

Outputs – a role for local authorities

- We want to encourage local authorities to develop effective structures or groupings through a better understanding of their communities and through a stronger confidence in working with faith communities on many levels – from representation to social action
- We are looking at ways to improve and strengthen delivery – for example improving faith literacy amongst local authorities, building stronger regional links for local authority leads on faith
- We are looking for innovation that can bring a step change to relationships and social action in our communities

Consultation time line and process

- We issued the consultation document in December 2007. We intend to publish the final version of the strategy in Summer 2008
- The consultation will provide an opportunity for all parts of all our communities to have an input into the strategy. We do not want to hear from just faith communities – this is a strategy for all communities
- The responses that were made to the Commission on Integration and Cohesion are already forming part of our thinking
- As well as using the Faith Communities Consultative Council as a sounding board, we have set up a small working group which will work with us as the responses to the consultation come in and are used to help shape the final strategy